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## GAME TOTEMS AMONG THE NORTHEASTERN ALGONKIANS<sup>1</sup>

By FRANK G. SPECK

THE fundamental concepts of the totemic complex are being constantly revised by critics who are now devoting much attention to the uncertain phenomena of totemism as well as to the main theme itself. Indeed through the investigations of certain phenomena, which seem at first to be totemic only by allowance, results may be expected which will be useful in the process of interpretation. Accordingly in culture groups where organic totemism in its accepted sense is not a prominent feature of social life, where society seems to be loosely organized, we may look for some principles which may help us to understand what social factors are actually present when totemism in its more pronounced form is not.

In the region touched by the investigations to be briefly discussed in this paper, there are no evidences of a clan or gentile organization. The social unit appears to be what I have termed in general the territorial family group, an institution which is fundamental throughout the entire region occupied by the tribes of the Wabanaki group and the populations north of the St. Lawrence river. It may be advisable at this point to mention that Morgan, through not being intimate enough with the ethnology of this region and no doubt also through his eagerness to find social institutions corroborating his general hypothesis, mistook, I believe, the family groups with animal names for gentile groups. By disposing of this the only claim put forth to show the existence of the gens in the Northeast we find no other references in the early literature of the region to indicate seriously that any type of society did prevail here other than what modern investigation discloses. The family unit accordingly, as I have assumed in several previous

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the American Anthropological Association, New York, 1916.

papers from investigations in the social life of a number of northern tribes, is with little doubt not only the most ancient social grouping in this area but it was probably also the original characteristic one among the Algonkians.

Since it seems that the weaker manifestations of the totemic concept are calling for more intensive study, as Dr. Boas himself points out in the latest word on this subject,<sup>1</sup> the individuality of the customs which form the totemic composite is often quite pronounced and the association of the elements themselves often quite artificial. Our data afford an instance of this. In our search for the separate historical or psychological sources which are now generally understood to compose the totemic complex, an interesting and moreover somewhat unusual series of cases is to be found among the Algonkians of the north and east. Among these tribes we can, I think, still perceive some of the elements which have contributed toward the social complex defined as totemic in the unrestricted sense of the term. The customs referring to diet-tabooes, naming, and religious practices which maintain an association with the totemic creature are quite common in various parts of the Algonkian group. But instances where the association is maintained to a noticeable extent by the *use* of the totemic creature are not so common.<sup>2</sup> In the region from which I have collected the material to be presented, the associated creatures appear in several tribes as economic totems in different degrees, association with which nicknames and paternal family names are determined,

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<sup>1</sup> F. Boas, "The Origin of Totemism," *American Anthropologist* (N. S.), vol. 18, no. 3, (1916).

<sup>2</sup> Observing in this region the attitude toward the totem where relationship is maintained by killing the totemic animal and eating it, and by using its fur, the association with the creature is not so unlike the more common practice of reverence for the totem by not killing, eating or using it as may seem. In the whole northern region the various animals are treated with respect by their slayers who prepare the bones and other remains of the game and dispose of them in a manner thought to be satisfactory to the animals' souls, so to speak. Thus in the religious thought of the north a hunter is satisfying an animal's spirit about as much when he kills the animal and disposes properly of its remains as when he refuses to molest it at all. While the above procedure is quite contrary in practice to the procedure of African, Australian, and a number of American totemites, it is not so contradictory in principle, its objective in reality being the maintenance of the game.

through which the use of land and game is inherited, and family kinship groups distinguished and held together by a common legendary origin.

### MALECITE

Among the Malecite the indications point out most clearly that name association with certain animals which constitute the food supply of either individuals or of larger groups, determines individual and even family group naming. Several quotations from older accounts show that the tribe itself was known by the nickname Muskrat, partly from depending for subsistence upon the muskrat.

There was also on the St. John, a division called Warastegoniak,<sup>1</sup> who were subsequently called by the other Abenaki the Mouskouasoaks, or water-rats either because, like these animals, they lived on the banks of the river, or because they highly esteemed the muskrat as food, which they do at the present time preferring its flesh beyond that of any other.<sup>2</sup>

The Abenaki (Aroosagunticook and Norridgewock) of St. Francis, Pierreville, Quebec, also designate the Malecite as *Musk-wa's'uwak*, Muskrats, to this day. A synonym for the Malecite, among the Penobscot at Oldtown, Maine, is also *Muskwe's'uwak*, Muskrats, and among the Micmac *ki'u'sux*, Muskrats.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Malecite in general, personal nicknames are in addition frequently determined by the kind of game which a hunter may pursue habitually, or that which he may happen, in the fur quest, to be most successful in getting. To illustrate this point I offer a few personal nicknames from the village of Tobique.<sup>4</sup>

<i>paga'm'k'</i>	fisher ( <i>Mustela pennanti</i> )	Joe Nicholas
<i>ki'uni'k'</i>	otter	Sosep Tomah
<i>kwa'k'wes</i>	fox	Chas. Nicholas
<i>sku'tamuk'</i>	trout	Andrew Nicholas
<i>espa'ns</i>	raccoon	Frank Francis
<i>keni'be'k'sis</i>	(?)	Francis Lola

<sup>1</sup> The native designation of the Malecite is *Wula'stegwi'ak*, Good River People.

<sup>2</sup> E. Jack, *Maliseet Legends*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. VIII (1895), pp. 193, 201, 207. Jack also says that the *totem* of the Malecite is a muskrat.

<sup>3</sup> See, also, S. T. Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> This material was first brought to my attention by Louis Francis and his wife Caroline Francis, in 1913, at Bar Harbor, Me., both of them reliable informants of the old school. The fragmentariness of this material, however, is due to the fact that I was not aware of the prospective development of the topic at the time.

Here we also have family nicknames of the same general scope and derivation.

<i>Native Family Nickname</i>	<i>Christian Family Name</i>
<i>ni'mo'ks</i>	sable, marten
<i>abi'tci'lu</i>	skunk
<i>ma'lsem</i>	wolf
<i>sku'tcm'</i>	trout
<i>sagwe's'</i>	weasel
<i>ki'u'xes</i>	muskrat
<i>gwa'bi't'</i>	beaver
<i>tci'a'kes</i>	mink
	Sockobi
	Saulis
	Sockabesin
	Ketcham
	Mitchell
	Saulis
	Sabadis
	Paul

The diminutive plurals of these animal names, ending in *-si'zak* were given by the informants as being commonly applied in the village to the younger members of some of these families, and the augmentative *kici'*, "old, big," as applicable to the older men.

In the case of the Malecite the game totem idea does not, so far as I know, exclusively dominate family or individual psychosocial associations, but it pervades them deeply in practice, because these animal nicknames have become to a certain extent incipient group names.

Tribal designations in which an animal figured as the emblem, existed apart from the family totem among other of the eastern tribes. In such cases, again, as among the Malecite, the animal was the game animal. The family emblem and the broader local band or tribal emblem, while probably related philogenetically, need not, nevertheless, be confused in interpretation. Tribes, as well as local bands composed of groups of families, had the totemic symbols, but unfortunately we do not know much about the possible ideas associated with them since our knowledge of them comes only from some early writers. Mallery<sup>1</sup> presents a little information on this subject obtained in 1888 from a Passamaquoddy. He says:

The animals figured are in all cases repeated consistently by each one of the several delineators, and in all cases there is some device to show a difference between the four canoes (figured with the animal representations) either in their structure or in their mode of propulsion, but these devices are not always consistent. It

<sup>1</sup> Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians." *Tenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1888-9, pp. 378-9.

is therefore probable that the several animals designated constitute the true and ancient totemic emblems, and that the accompaniment of the canoes is a modern differentiation.

The tribal emblem of the Passamaquoddy consists of two Indians in a canoe, both using paddles and not poles, following a fish, the pollock.<sup>1</sup> The emblem of the Malecite is two Indians in a canoe both with poles, following a muskrat. The Micmac emblem is two Indians both with paddles, in a canoe built with high middle parts, "familiarily called humpback," following a deer. The Penobscot emblem is two Indians in a canoe, one with a paddle and the other with a pole, following an otter.

#### PENOBSCOT

The Penobscot were divided into twenty-two individual family groups, not exogamic, with an indeterminate line of descent, some of them with a legendary origin and possessing names which are names of animals with which they claim indirect relationship. The family forms also a local band, with preempted hunting territory and emblems, used as territory markers, consisting of the figures of the associated animals. Our point here, however, is that the animals with which the families claim their associations are the animals which these same families prey upon, obtaining their flesh and hides for subsistence. The family names in some instances are thus derived from the animals which the members mainly hunt

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<sup>1</sup> The Passamaquoddy tribal name is derived, according to numerous authorities, from the term denoting "those who pursue the pollock." It might appear from the above statement, which I have not as yet had the opportunity to test among the Passamaquoddy, that the tribal name, as in the case of the Malecite just mentioned, is derived here also from the animal mostly sought for by the people for food.

Still another instance of the same thing is to be found in the case of the band of Indians who inhabited Cobscooksee lake, Kennebec county, Maine, who were known as *Kaba'sekantiak*, "people who pursue the sturgeon" (*kaba'se*). (Cf. E. A. Kendal, *Travels through the northern parts of the United States*. New York, 1809, p. 124). These Indians not only regarded themselves as Sturgeons, but had a legend relating how one of their ancestors was transformed into a sturgeon. In a similar category perhaps should be included Le Clercq's information (quoted by Mr. Mechling, *American Anthropologist*, (N. S.) vol. 18, 1916, p. 300) that the Micmac at Restigouche wore a salmon, those of Miramichi belonged to a band which had an emblem similar to a cross, and that the other bands had their particular emblems.

and which are thought to abound over others in their particular hunting territories. So we have the maritime families subsisting primarily upon the marine animals and deriving their group names and individual names from them. These names are, moreover, inherited by the men through their fathers. While not all of the family groups fall under the above game-totem classification, thirteen of the approximate twenty-two do. In these instances we should note that the informant, Newell Lyon, stated distinctly that the different families subsisted largely upon the flesh and traded in the hides of the animals by whose names they were known.

<i>Totemic Name</i>	<i>Modern Name</i>	<i>Location of Hunting Territory</i>
Lobster	Mitchell	Penobscot bay.
Crab	Susup	Penobscot bay.
Eel	Neptune	Kenduskeag river valley ( <i>Kande's'ki'k</i> "overgrown eel place").
Beaver	No modern name	Penobscot valley.
Sturgeon	Sockalexis	Ragged lake, and Moosehead lake.
Raccoon	No modern name	Salmon river region.
Wolf	Polis and Susup	Nahmakanta region.
Squirrel	Attean	Caribou and Ragged lakes region.
Wolverine	Lewis	Mattawamkeag region. ( <i>L'anksus</i> "wolverine" lake).
Otter	Saul and Nicola	Katahdin region.
Wildcat	Fransway and Penus	Musungum and Seboois lakes region.
Hare	Newell	Masardis waters
Yellow Perch	Penewit	Caucomgomoc region.

The economic aspect in the associations of the families listed is as strong from the internal point of view as it is in the direct testimony of the informant. I might add that the Penobscot still apply animal temporary nicknames to individuals, names derived from any noteworthy fondness either for hunting, trapping, or eating certain animals. Trivial nicknames also arise from having had a successful season in hunting some particular class of fur-bearing animals. While hunting or trapping a certain animal, an unusual experience, an extraordinarily piece of good or bad luck, an escape, an unexpected happening, noteworthy weather and the like, are often sufficient to give rise to nicknames from the particular animal concerned. So, as among the Malecite, there are always

apt to be at Oldtown men known as Muskrat, Weasel, Chickadee, Moosemeat, Bear, Smoked Fish, and others whose names are accounted for in the village by current anecdotes.<sup>1</sup>

An important psychological association incidental to the matters presented here is a certain function of another kind of individual totem as a dream animal and as a supernatural helper, a sort of animal proxy in whose disguise the individual may transfer his soul in order to fight his enemies or project himself into other places for spying. The totem animal is known in this respect as *baohi'gan*, "means by which magic is performed." Many tales are told of fights between the proxies of different sorcerers in the past. I shall not, however, attempt to deal in further detail with this phenomenon now. The concept is shared by all the Wabanaki tribes and the term *ba-* is cognate in all these dialects in the same sense. I may say that in the list of families with totemic names which has just been given, the animals designated were not automatically the *baohi'gan* of the men of these families; the latter was a different animal associate. The above conclusions are based on conditions existing only in the memory of the oldest men now living among the Indians.

#### MISTASSINI AND MONTAGNAIS

Differing considerably in its scope, a similar psychological phenomenon appears in the association that prevails between a hunter and his dream manitou among the Mistassini band of Labrador. We may, I think, perceive a remote similarity here with what has already been discussed from the corresponding area south St. Lawrence. I will give the substance of information obtained from a Mistassini informant just as the data appear in my notes, because at the time of my investigation I was not fully aware of the import of the data and I have not had the opportunity of returning to this field since.

The Mastassini,<sup>2</sup> I may say, neither derive personal nicknames,

<sup>1</sup> A census of nicknames and explanations from the tribe is in course of preparation in another paper dealing in detail with the family grouping in this tribe.

<sup>2</sup> The members of this band, who call themselves *Mitaci'ni'wi'i'nuls*, "big rock people," hunt about Lake Mistassini. They form one of the intermediate Cree-Montagnais groups.



nor family names nor band names from the animals hunted. The individual families, to be sure, do form fairly definite groupings with paternally inherited hunting territories but no further associations have as yet been noted as existing between the individuals and animals. Hence, group totemism has not developed here as far as it has among the Penobscot although the family territorial group seems to be the fundamental social unit to as great a degree.

The following translation of an excerpt from a text will serve to introduce and define, though only roughly, an association between the hunter and his dream spirit as a game animal.

It is known that when a beaver once comes to tell something it is never in vain that he speaks, for it is like what a great prophet says. He also wants his meat pan made to look pretty. After it is done and decorated just as he wants it, he never fails (to supply his beneficiary with instructions where to find his game). Yet he does not wish different kinds of meat to be cooked in his meat pan, only his own kind of meat he wants to have eaten in it.<sup>1</sup>

By this we understand that the hunter is visited by a guardian spirit in the shape of a beaver who instructs him where and under what conditions he will find game. Since beaver forms such an important element in the diet of the tribes of this region, the natives believe that the beaver spirit in dreams directs them generally to where beaver may be found. The meat pan referred to is a flat birchbark dish, about eighteen inches in diameter, carefully sewed, and decorated with spots of red paint in the bottom both inside and out and with a covering of red paint over the seams. Whatever meat is obtained, after following instructions received in a dream given by the beaver guardian spirit, is to be eaten in this pan without the use of a knife. The game so obtained must be cooked without the backbone. It must be boiled whole and it must be consumed before the following morning, at which time, it is believed, the beaver spirit will again visit the hunter and give him new instructions for his hunt. The meat pan referred to is an article found in the possession of almost every hunter and family-head among the Mistassini. It is kept carefully wrapped in a white cloth when not in use. Kakwa, the informant, said that he

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by Kakwa at Pointe Bleue, Province of Quebec.

understood that good hunters would attribute their success to having received dream directions almost every night.

Again, at Lake St. John, among the related Montagnais, we find a similar custom. Here, in brief, the dream usually consists of the vision of almost any of the numerous game animals. This dream is thought to anticipate the capture of the animal seen. Here also each hunter has his own pan from which he eats the meat that he obtains. The meat pans of the Lake St. John people are somewhat different from those of the Mistassini in being deeper: on the outside are etched the figures of animals which have revealed themselves to the owner in dreams and which have been taken.

In both of the above cases, the point to be emphasized in connection with the game totem idea is that the personal guardian spirit of the individual is an animal of the same class that is hunted.

We have seen that the idea of the so-called game totem is fundamental to the social life of the Penobscot to a degree that is not equalled in the related neighboring tribes. This appearance of greater prominence among the Penobscot, it cannot be denied, may possibly be due to the inequality of the methods of inquiry. Yet I may say that I have not been dependent solely upon the negative character of the evidence presented by Wallis and Mechling, who have both orally reported on the question of totemic groups in these tribes, because I have myself tried informants among the Malecite and several Micmac bands without disclosing the material that is so strongly featured among the Penobscot. I believe that the differences in social life among these tribes, differences indicated by our available material, are fairly real ones and that they are to be accounted for by the assumption that the tribal groups were developing socially along independent lines. Considering the restricted area involved and the differences encountered, one is impressed, incidentally, by the necessity of following lines of independent inquiry in investigating this field.

Whether we are to regard the totemic complex as a natural but unconscious native concept, or whether it is an artificial complex, it seems apparent that the multi-variety of the associated forces

in inchoate stages of society is shown here in a single primitive culture area, where we see instances of the elementary individual manitou, the naming, the mythological, symbolic, and pseudo-physical characteristics, all, in nascent aspects, derived from or associated with the animal hunted for food. The game totem idea appears plurally in connection with some of the above aspects of society in this region, which incidentally in several of the general totemic origin theories, Haddon's in particular, have figured as possible starting points.

It will be very instructive if, in the prosecution of further studies, any instance among the Algonkian tribes comes to light where the territorial family group with indeterminate descent has metamorphosed into a true matrilineal or patrilineal group. I think that I am not entirely wrong in believing that the Penobscot present an incomplete phase of such a development trending toward the gentile formation. This, I also think, is the normal direction of social growth among the Algonkian, where they are unaffected by outside contact, a claim which is supported, as far as present investigations show, by the wide distribution of the territorial family band with patrilineal features in the typical Algonkian culture-habitat. It is quite consistent that the more southern Algonkian tribes, like the Delaware, should have the clan organization superimposed upon the older formation, for among them agriculture is in evidence proportionate to their southern habitat and, perhaps still more significant, in proportion to their proximity to the Iroquois.

As an excuse for presenting at this time such a very brief and superficial outline of a somewhat heterodoxical form of the totemistic association, I should perhaps say that certain circumstances seem to stand in the way of the publication of my more detailed studies of northeastern Algonkian ethnology. Since it may be some time before these do appear it seems desirable that the topic at least be made available.

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